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NEW FEDERAL LAW REGARDING FIELD SANITATION
FOR AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES

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A new Federal law regarding field sanitation became effective May 30, 1987. This law sets specific requirements that agricultural employers must provide for agricultural employees who perform hand-labor operations in the field. The law applies to all agricultural establishments with 11 or more hand-labor employees.

The law applies to any agricultural establishment. An agricultural establishment is defined to be any business operation that produces food, fiber, or other products such as seed, seedlings, plants, or part of plants using paid labor. An agricultural employer is defined as any person, corporation, association, or other legal entity which owns or operates an agricultural establishment, or contracts for the purchase of agricultural crops and participates substantially in the production of the crop, or hires and supervises employees or manages an agricultural establishment. Hand-labor operations are defined to include any agricultural activity performed by hand or with hand tools as well as any

additional activities performed in conjunction with the field labor such as hand packing of produce. These definitions are certainly inclusive of hand-labor activities associated with specialty crops and may be interpreted even more broadly.

The actual requirements involve drinking water, hand-washing facilities, and toilet facilities. The employer must provide hand-labor employees potable water for drinking. Potable water is water that meets the drinking water standards set forth by the state or local authority or the standards set forth by the U.S. E.P.A.'s drinking water regulations. The water must be cool and in sufficient amounts to meet the needs of the employees. It is to be dispensed in single-use drinking cups or by fountains. The water must be kept in covered containers which maintain water quality and are cleaned regularly and refilled daily or more often if needed.

Toilet and handwashing facilities must be provided at a rate of one each for every 20 employees. Toilet facilit-

ies are to be either a fixed or portable facility used for the collection and containment of both defecation and urination products. They must also be supplied with toilet paper. Handwashing facilities are facilities providing a container with adequate potable water, soap, and single-use towels. Both types of facilities shall be located within one-quarter of a mile of each hand-laborer's place of work and they shall be located near each other. Neither of these facilities need to be provided for employees who work in the field for 3 hours or less during the day. The toilet facilities must be ventilated, screened, have self-closing doors which can be latched from the inside, and provide privacy. They shall be maintained in accordance with public sanitation practices, meaning they shall be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. The disposal of wastes from these facilities shall not cause unsanitary conditions. The hand-washing facilities shall be refilled with potable water as often as necessary and like the toilet facilities be maintained in a clean and sanitary manner.

The agricultural employer is also responsible for notifying the employees of the locations of the drinking water and sanitation facilities as well as instructing them on the importance of good hygiene practices. These hygiene practices include using the proper facilities, drinking plenty of water, urinating frequently, and

washing hands before and after eating, smoking, and using toilet facilities. The employer shall allow employees reasonable use of the facilities throughout the workday.

The effective date of this law was May 30, 1987 however, employers actually have until July 30, 1987 to comply with all requirements except for the provision of potable water.